Legal Applicant: Teach for America

Application ID: 14ES156337

Program Name: Teach For America-SLA/GNO

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provides sufficient evidence that the districts in Louisiana are in need of quality teachers.

The applicant provides a compelling case that the communities where Members will serve are in need of support for students who are performing poorly academically.

The applicant provides important information about the need of having more effective Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teachers.

The applicant provides compelling statistical data relating the need to improve student achievement throughout Louisiana, which ranks 48th out 50 educationally according to the most recent data related. This demonstrates the need for intervention by providing quality teachers which can transform the life prospects of the children they teach.

The applicant describes the link between high quality teachers and improved student achievement.

The applicant presents a sound argument for AmeriCorps members and alumni as vital components of educational reform in Louisiana.

The applicant provides strong evidence that their intervention will solve the teacher shortage problem in the community

The 10 cited studies match the program model that the applicant plans to implement.

The proposed program is likely to be successful in producing strong educational leaders because past Members who have experienced the program are now leaders of eight of the nine KIPP schools, which had the third-highest 8th grade LEAP passage rate among all school districts in Louisiana.

The program provides training and opportunities for Members to build stronger relationships with families and community members.

The applicant demonstrates success in showing its Theory of Change model is effective in yielding teacher retention by exceeding performance measures during 2012-13.

Weaknesses:

The evidence cited by the applicant does not fully align with the documented needs of the community.

The applicant's presentation of data that was based on post-Katrina intervention contradicts previous documentation in that it works to weaken the severity of the need.

The applicant does not provide any citations of the statistical data, which makes it difficult to determine how current they are.

The applicant states that there is a shortage of effective STEM teachers, but did not provide any data to support this.

It is unclear whether the program will be able to improve student achievement due to limited descriptions of activities related to this outcome.

The Theory of Change was not well-articulated and, in combination with the Logic Model, only provided a cursory version of the program.

The outcomes described in the Logic Model were not well-defined and did not fully align with the activities.

Among the 10 cited studies, the applicant does not provide any result data or methodology, which makes it difficult to determine how effective the studied programs were.

At times, the applicant simply states a list of references without providing further information about what those studies are about and what their results are.

Insufficient evidence is presented in either the narrative or the logic model by the applicant relating how the AmeriCorps members will leverage 300 volunteers to support students and classrooms or what these volunteers will be doing.

It is not clear whether the Members will be highly effective in solving community problems because the evidence of the program's effectiveness is unsubstantiated by the research explicated by the applicant.

There was an absence of data to support that this program has achieved its intended outcome of improving student achievement.

The applicant's sole indicator of past performance was retention, including alumni remaining in the field of education.

Although the applicant successfully retains more Members in the field of education, only 62% of them remained in teaching last year. This information contradicts with the current proposal, which focuses on retaining highly effective teachers.

The applicant mentions that their Members had improved student performance in the communities, but no data is provided to support this statement.